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The Way We Think

We like to believe that as individuals, we are independent with unique perspectives on life and all that's going on in the world. I'm not sure this is true. Our values, decisions and opinions sometimes feel frighteningly parochial. Speak to someone across the channel or a few thousand miles away on another continent and you will see a different world view. The things that obsess them and fill their precious human minds is often different to the hyped-up news that we here on our little island.

Social media, in the past few years, has opened up infinite glimpses into other people's perspectives and this should be a good thing, but it doesn't often feel that way. Often, it seems more like anti-social media, with trillions of opinions and egos flicking around Earth at the speed of light. And yet each nation, with each tribal division within each nation, remains fixated on the ideas that shout loudest and most frequently.

Tune in to any news radio station in the UK and you will hear massively important updates about things that mean absolutely nothing to 99 percent of the world's population. Be it weather, politics or sport, the 'news' generally guides us to perceive the world in a certain way. The British, I believe, are superb at rebelling against corporate thinking, but it is difficult to rebel when local truths rather than global truths form the foundation of our beliefs.

This is necessary, up to a point, as the concerns of every village, town or city throughout the world are too vast to consider for any one individual. Even the greatest philosophers will have little or no knowledge of what exactly is happening in most factions of most societies other than their own. Only the most magnanimous imaginations try to see universal reasons for the way things are and the way things could be. Most of us are simply reasoning on the basis of our local experiences, no matter which newspaper we read or which radio station we listen to.

That is unless we tune in to radio stations abroad where we find that they are often discussing events we know absolutely nothing about nor need to know anything about. There is a 'need to know' factor in surviving the complexities of life on Earth. Keeping warm, fed, safe and participating in a fair, just and equitable society does not necessarily demand knowing what's going on in the mayoral elections of Manchester, let alone towns and cities light years away. Our minds cleverly sift through the limitless potential of 'news' for the things that matter to us as we earn our daily bread.

This is necessary, but I suspect that there are 'Truths' out there, not in the X File sense, but in a deeply important way that somehow evade us all, and that we would be far kinder, hopeful and just as a race if we understood these hidden truths, using them in our daily lives as first principles for organising our workaday world.